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ABSTRACT

An experimental program in California may offer a potential answer to the nation's acute need for bilingual teachers. In the 1960s and 1970s the number of limited- and non-English-speaking students expanded rapidly, especially among the Hispanic and Asian-Filipino populations. Students with such English-language problems are more likely to drop out of school or to lag several years behind English-speaking students. Because of these problems, federal judicial and administrative decisions have required bilingual education for these students. However, there are far fewer bilingual teachers than are needed. Existing training programs are not filling the need and also have not substantially improved teachers' attitudes toward minority children. The Bay Area Bilingual Education League (BABEL) created a six-week "immersion" program to help solve both these problems. In an initial project, 90 American educators lived for four weeks in Mexico, where they received both language and educational training and did practicum work--all in Spanish. Early results indicate that participants improved not only their knowledge of Spanish and of Hispanic culture, but also their attitudes toward minorities. (PW)

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IMMERSION. A METHOD IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT?

James M. Reusswig

A few years ago, while I was still an urban superintendent, my wife and I were enjoying one of those rare, leisurely Saturday mornings. It was so leisurely that we were absolutely exhausting both the morning newspaper and a large pot of coffee. I was even reading those usually insipid articles that editors use to simply fill space. One such article I found to be particularly amusing. It was about a man who, while cleaning his cellar on a Saturday, discovered a claim check for the repair of a long-forgotten pair of shoes. The

EA 013 750

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claim check was seven years old. Since the shoe repair shop was still in its same location, he thought it would be fun to present the claim check to the cobbler. He did. The cobbler went to the back of his shop and soon emerged to tell the man that, yes, the shoes were there. The man was astonished, but quickly recovered his aplomb and said, "Why that's great! Can I have them now?" The cobbler replied, "They'll be ready next Tuesday.

We laughed, of course, for it is a great story. Then later I thought about it and other possible claim checks. I thought of the thousands and thousands of Black, Hispanic, Chinese and other minority children and youth who attend segregated schools who could present us with a claim check, now 26 years old and say, "Here is my claim check for integrated education". And we would reply, "It will be ready next Tuesday". Or the child who could present to us a centuries old claim check for her equality and we would say, "It will be ready next Tuesday". Or the uncountable numbers of children who could present a claim check for their dignity and self-esteem and we would reply, "We didn't mean to take them from you. We will return them to you next Tuesday." Or the children who are not proficient in English language who could present to us a claim check, now six years old, for equal learning opportunities and we would say, "Those opportunities will be ready Tuesday".

It is not possible in this article to address all of the overdue claim checks. It is possible though to direct our attention to one of those claim checks and begin exploring one aspect of getting ready for Tuesday. The longer we delay addressing the issues of equality that affect our limited- and non-English speaking children, the greater the problem becomes. This article will discuss three issues:

1. The nature and scope of the problem of limited- and non-English speaking children.
2. The need for immensely increased emphasis toward the development of bilingual teachers and other education specialists.
3. An experimental staff development program aimed at easing the crisis proportions of issues one and two, and its portent for replication as a means of getting ready for Tuesday.

First Issue

The limited- or non-English speaking children in our society are expanding at amazing rates. (Ethnic Groups and Public Education in California, 1978). The ten-year period, from 1967-1977, was one of dramatic change in the population of California's public schools. Total pupil population decreased by 146,690. Yet the numbers of Hispanic pupils increased by 275,887! During this same span of

years, the Asian/Filipino pupils increased by 79,435. These two groups comprise the principal minority populations of the limited- and non-English speaking children. Their total increase amounted to 355,322 children. The impact of linguistic minorities is not limited to California. It is a national phenonmonen. There are an estimated 3,600,000 pupils in the country judged to be in need of some form of language assistance to enable them to cope with the regular school curriculum. (Pifer, 1979). Hispanic children comprise 30 percent of New York City's enrollment, 45 percent in Los Angeles, 52 percent in San Antonio, 32 percent in Miami, 31 percent in Denver, and 35 percent in Hartford. A congressional study suggests that Hispanics may well be our nation's largest minority group by the end of the decade.

Given that linguistic minority children are rapidly increasing in number causes some people to say, "So what? That is not an educational problem". Though one has learned to expect such response to any social, political, or econimic issue, it is seriously regretable when educators make the response. Far too many do. They apparently have not looked at the impact of education (or miseducation) on this significantly large group of children and youth. One of the most articulate and concise statements about the needs of linguistic minority children comes from Alan Pifer, President, Carnigie Corporation. In the President's annual statement on an issue of current

interest, he chose to write an essay entitled, Bilingual Education and the Hispanic Challenge. In that essay he said,

> "Unfortunately, Hispanic children as a whole have not fared well in the public education system. Typically they are two to three grade levels behind other students. A mere 30 percent manage to comlete high school. Nationwide, in urban ghetto areas, the school dropout rate for Hispanics reaches as high as 85 percent. Less than 7 percent have completed college. In 1975-76, Hispanics received only 2.8 percent of the B.A. degrees awarded, 2 percent of the Masters Degrees, 2.6 percent of the law degrees, 2.3 percent of the medical degrees, and 1.2 percent of all doctorates." (Pifer, pp. 9-10)

The results of this non-achievement is devasting. The median family income of Hispanic Americans ranges from $5,000 to $9,300 below the family income for the nation as a whole, ($17,600 in 1978). Up to 30 percent are living in poverty. The rate of unemployment among urban youth approaches 50 percent. These data portend a dismal and increasingly angry, alientated future, for our children. Art Pearl (1978) has written, "Poverty is not new - but there is something new in poverty - there is no way out".

The vitality and stability of our nation requires that we discuss that way out. Though public education should not single-handedly

bear the responsibility for the plight of these minority children, it has not done what it is constitutionally required to do: provide equal educational opportunity. Many critics have now become doubtful as to whether the schools really can change enough to become effective. Some questions whether the schools want to become effective for all of America's children. However, counter-balancing, even over-balancing, the pessimism of these critics is the continued belief by Hispanic families that education is the answer toward their children's sharing fully in the American society.

Second Issue

If, as has been demonstrated, that educational practices of the past have not eased the plight of Hispanic and other limited- and non-English speaking children, what practices should be embraced to get ready for Tuesday? Though there is much controversy surrounding it, bilingual education is the practice that must be given serious attention. The 1974 decision of the United States Supreme Court in Lau vs. Nichols found that linguistic minority children were not receiving equal opportunity. The import of the Lau decision was enormous: language rights were recognized as a civil right and schools were obligated to provide special assistance to students with limited English-speaking ability in overcoming their language handicap. Furthermore, children were not to be denied full participation in the educational process while they were learning English.

Subsequently, the Office for Civil Rights in its guidelines rejected the sole use of English-as-a-Second language (ESL) as an appropriate remedy. This was tantamount to requiring that bilingual programs be established.

Obviously there can be no effective bilingual program without bilingual teachers and other bilingual educational specialist. To adequately staff the schools with bilingual teachers has been, and continues to be, a problem of horrendous magnitude.

The early years of bilingual education quickly utilize nearly all of the available "in house" supply of teachers who were themselves bilingual. These teachers who were already in the various school systems were ideally suited to the concept of bilingual education. Not only were they bilingual, but they also were of Hispanic or other non-Anglo cultures. Thus, they brought two important assets to the classroom--native language skill and role model. That supply, unfortunately, was very few in numbers and came no where near meeting the educational needs of limited-English speaking students.

Since those early years, the problem of staffing has magnified. The rapid growth in the numbers of limited-English speaking children has already been addressed. The State of California projected its needs for bilingual teachers. The study done in 1978, when there were 4,071 credentialed bilingual teachers, estimated that 17,876 would

be needed in 1980! With less than seven percent of Hispanics completing college, and fewer of those selecting education as a career, it is obvious that staffing needs will have to be met through the surplus of Anglo teachers. Thus far, the attempts to meet this supply through making monolingual teachers bilingual has not been encouraging. There has been a paucity of funding and, perhaps due to that lack, non-aggressive recruiting. Also, the re-training or staff development efforts have not substantially improved the attitudes of the teachers towards minority children and youth, especially the poor (Pearl, 1978). The prospects for getting ready for Tuesday are not cheerful.

Third Issue

There is an old adage that there are two ways to get to the top of an oak tree--one can sit on an acorn and wait, or one can climb the branches one at a time. The children and their futures cannot wait while we sit on the acorn.

The summer of 1980 might have brought us within reach of the first branch. The Bay Area Bilingual Education League (BABEL), Inc. with courageous and generous assistance from the Office of Special Education, California State Department of Education, reached out for the first branch. BABEL envisioned, initiated, and implemented an approach to bilingualism: Immersion. Ninety education professionals

(40 teachers, 37 school psychologists and 13 language therapists) were involved in an experimental program to improve their Spanish language skills and to bring about attitudinal changes that would accrue benefit to limited-English proficient pupils. Four other similar programs occured during the summer of 1980. They were held in California. The one reported here was held in Mexico.

The 90 participants were totally immersed in Spanish language and Mexican culture. The Institute was held at the Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara. This became a self-contained community where only Spanish language was used by participants and staff. This was based on the notion that when English is allowed, the second language becomes an artificial classroom exercise instead of being a practical tool for communication. Lodging for the participants had to meet the criteria that it be representative of the living conditions and lifestyles of the limited-English proficient pupils the participants serve in their school districts.

The Institute was comprised of two sections: one section was for the 40 classroom teachers; the other for the 37 psychologists and 13 speech terapists. The daily instructional program was from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. One and one-half hours were devoted to Spanish language instruction. Participants attended content courses from 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. each day. The content for psychologists/ therapists was special education terminology, special assessment issues, testing instruments, bilingual education, development and writing of

bilingual individualized learning plans, language development and articulation activities, interviewing techniques and strategies for limited-English proficient students and parents, and the writing of case histories and learning plans. The content for the classroom teachers was culture, methodology and techniques for bilingual instruction and methods for teaching Spanish reading, and vocabulary building class. All instruction was in Spanish.

Another significant feature of this Institute was a "hands on" component. Participant psychologists and language therapists were teamed to work with children of the University's special education laboratory. The team worked with the same child(ren) for the six weeks of the Institute. The team administered tests, developed and wrote case histories, and individualized educational plans for these Mexican children. The teacher participants were also "hands on". They worked in two barrio schools with an enrollment of 225 low-income Mexican children. Teachers worked in groups of six. They taught reading, mathematics and culture--all in Spanish. They also taught English-as-a-Second Language. Each participant was required to prepare and teach at least two complete sequences of the laboratory practicum curriculum.

The three components briefly described above (Spanish language, content courses, and practicum), were the principal activities of the Institute. There were, of course, social and cultural activities

too. The important questions to ask is, "Did it make a difference?" The initial and preliminary evaluation is encouraging. (At this date only the evaluation on the Psychologist/Therapist program have been completed).

- Thirty-four of the participants voluntarily took the oral exam for the Bilingual Certificate of Competence. Thirty passed.
- There was a 40% gain in knowledge of language as measured by the High Intensity Language Training Assessment.
- Forty-three of the participants took the BABEL Cutltural Test. Thirty-three passed.
- Using pre and post tests for content area of Bilingual Psychology, participants registered a gain of 150%.
- There was a 220% gain in knowledge in Bilingual Testing and assessment.
- Attitudes were assessed using a pre and post observation checklist. The pre mean score was 68.5. the post mean score was 82.3, an exciting increase of 13.8.

The impact of the Institute upon the participants might be better measured by how they felt. One participant surprised the staff and his fellow participants by keeping a diary of his experiences and summarizing those in a statement shared at the Institute. He said, in part,

"I'm sitting here in a far from luxurious hotel in Guadalajara, Mexico, relfecting on what has happened in the last four weeks. I'm one of 50 professionals (psychologists and language specialist) sent here by the State Department of Education not only to learn Spanish, but to understand as much as possible about the difficulties experienced by children who speak little or no English in our California schools. Much of the emphasis is on the use of appropriate testing instruments that can more accurately determine the Mexican-American child's learning potential and achievement rates. Another major component is identifying specific cultural factors that may inhibit optimum progress in schools.

It may all sound like some pretty high level stuff, and besides, who wouldn't mind spending 6 weeks in Mexico just to get away from the smog in Los Angeles or the heat in Sacramento? That's just what I thought until the full impact of the "choque cultural" (cultural shock) hit me. Let me explain.

I thought they had carried this total immersion idea (that means sink or swim) a little too far when all this vital information one might need to survive was given in Spanish....Trying to have your daily needs met using a very foreign language can be quite an experience....

The weekly academic program consisted of 5 hours of daily instruction and we were expected to put in two hours of homework each night....Also, twice a week, tutors from the University came to the hotel for two hours of conversation in Spanish (it turned out to be a real highlight of the program). As you might expect, all of the classes were conducted totally in Spanish and much of the material was fairly technical. That was bad enough, but we only had two short breaks from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. each day! Maybe it was a new method of torture: you put someone in a situation where they not only don't understand what's going on, but you starve them to death at the same time....

I have to say that the instructors were all experts in their fields and had a lot of important information to share (at least that's what my more advanced colleagues told me during the first two weeks). I would estimate that I comprehended about 30-40% during that initial period. I often had a hard time figuring out whether the insturctor had announced early dismissal or that we were about to have a dictation lesson. When no one else stood up, I knew I'd better get my notebook out.

There were a variety of emotional reactions I had during the breaking-in period. I became depressed, withdrawn, angry and often downright unpleasant to be around. I complained to everyone, except to those people who could do something to change things. I wanted to scream, "This isn't fair!"

The most humbling experience, however, was feeling DUMB. I don't like to feel dumb (I don't know too many people who do). I felt especially dumb when everybody seemed to be nodding that they understood (I now know that many really didn't understand, but they were sure good at nodding). It's true that someone could have sat me down and said, "Hey, you're not dumb." "This is your first major exposure to Spanish; you can't expect to be fluent in two weeks." Guess what; I still would have felt dumb. It's a tricky business trying to talk people out of of their feelings.

But now it is week four and a half and counting. Things have changed for me. My confidence has returned and my language comprehension has improved considerably (my expressive skills lag far behind, but at least I understand what's going on)....

What brought about the change? I'm not entirely sure, but I could rely on fiends who allowed me to express my frustrations and I leaned on sympathetic instructors. As important as anything else, I was able to convey my concerns about the program to the man in charge, Dr. B. Roberto Cruz (Executive Director, BABEL, Inc.). He is probably one of the most charismatic fellows I've run into in a long time and he's a good listener as well. Changes were made in the program and I truly felt like more of a participant in the program's success rather than just a recipient.

But, this article is not really about me. I am sharing my experiences only to help focus on the much more profound tragedies occuring daily in our schools. You see, I can go home soon. My sentence is about up. I can reclaim the life I know best, my family, friends and work. I can stop the pain of choque cultural by boarding a plane. I can fall back refreshingly (like the old ice tea ad) into my own world. BUT WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN?

Yes, you have done your job well, Roberto Cruz. You have etched into my memory an experience I can't easily forget. If I try and forget, I will be dishonest to the professional I've chosen. But, I have a choice! WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN?

I think of the countless little ones who have no choice, whose only sin is that they speak little or no English, who sit in countless classrooms wondering what's going on. Who will teach them to shout, "This isn't fair!" Who will listen to them as I was listened to? Who can they lean on? Will they continue to sit and wait and endure and feel dumb? Perhaps now, there are more of us who will listen and help...." (September, 1980)

Yes, what about the children? The Institute seems to have been successful. Much more evaluation must be done. The next locale of the evaluations must be in the schools where these psychologists and speech therapists work. It must determine whether the Institute has really

changed things for the children. The evaluators need to discover whether the Institute met a goal stated by Edward Aguirre, former United States Commissioner of Education, as he welcomed the participants,

> "....we have not identified or appropriately tested Spanish-speaking children with learning disabilities or abilities (for I also refer to many students with great intellectual potential) so that we are able to provide them a prescriptive education program based on their needs. Why have we not? The reason is simple; there have not been enough Spanish speaking teachers, psychologists or speech therapists that could evaluate or correctly prescribe, in Spanish, programs for these children. The purpose of this Institute is toward preventing inaccurate diagnosis and the educational negligence of the Spanish speaking child."

It is too early to know if immersion programs are the answer to ~~equal~~ DEVELOPING COMPETENT, CARING PROFESSIONAL BILINGUAL PERSONNEL ~~educational opportunities for linguistic minority children~~. The initial assessments are hopeful. If the second level of assessment and the teacher section evaluations are equally as positive then this approach to staff development should expand. It alone will not fill all of the staffing needs for bilingual personnel. Both the State and Federal governments need to encourage other approaches, too.

The futures of nearly 4,000,000 children, many of whom desperately need bilingual instruction to enable them to acquire English proficiency, are at stake. Pifer (1978) in his essay makes the stakes greater,

"As for Hispanic children, their education is far too important a matter to be left to chance, vague hopes, rhetoric, or politics. All of us have an undeniable stake in their induction into the larger American society and their preparation to be effective, productive citizens. They are an inseparable part of the nation's future and therefore of all our futures."

The greatest challenge in staff development today is developing competent bilingual personnel. One program has been described here. There is room and need for other innovative programs. It is especially incumbent upon teacher educators to join in this search for equality. The claim check has been presented. What will we say when Tuesday comes?

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